

# The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

## Livonia, Michigan Chapter



**January 2025**  
**Volume 37, Number 1**

**The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.**

### **Chapter Leader**

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### **Meeting Information**

When: First Thursday of  
each month. 7-9 p.m.  
Where: St. Timothy's Church  
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,  
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of  
Six Mile

### **Coming Events:**

**January 2nd -7:00 pm - Meeting**  
*see page 7*

**Tuesday, January 21st at 6:00 pm.**  
**TCF Dinner at: Archie's Tavern 37714**  
**Six mile Rd. Livonia. It is in the Laurel**  
**Park Mall.**

Contact Joyce Gradinscak,  
734-560-6883, you can text or call her.

**No Craft meeting this month**

### *The Holidays Are Behind Us*

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throat tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we, too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and

love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deeper way.

*Marie Andrews,*  
*TCF, Southern Maryland*

### *For David*

It's impossible to explain the pain you have when you lose someone so dear! Your life stops! And when it starts again, it is with a huge gap. Your life as you knew it will never be the same, for you and anyone that knows you. There are many firsts, the birthdays, the holidays; how to answer the questions of strangers—how many children do you have?

As I was thinking about the last 7 1/2 years without you in our lives, I discover that there is a void in my memory. I remember that the days and months ran together. I remember wondering if my life will ever again be like those who move through their days as if nothing devastating has ever happened to them. I notice that I have lost the ability to focus—even today my attention span isn't as good as it used to be. I still feel the pain and the void when I'm counting seating for a family get together; I

*(continued on page 4)*

# **Our Children Loved and Remembered Always**

*This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.*

## **Let Us Remember Them Always**

*Child                      Parent, Grandparent, Sibling                      Date                      Age*

For members only



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

*Softly ... may peace  
replace heartache  
and cherished memories  
remain with you always on  
your child's birthday*

look forward to my dreams in hopes that you will be there!

The only thing that comes to my mind when trying to compare this pain to a life experience is when you skid and fall, and keep sliding. You badly scrape and cut a knee or an elbow or both. The pain is so unbearable. It's hard to move without it hurting. Your body goes into shock. When it finally starts scabbing over and healing, the slightest movement can open the wound back up; it oozes and it seeps, and you ask if this misery will ever stop! And then the healing process starts all over again.

Finally, the scab is gone, but a scar remains. At first, the scar is red and very tender until it gets used to being there. Then it becomes taught and tight! Then, one day when someone points out the scar—you say, yes, it's a reminder of a very painful accident. I see it every day, but now I am able to bend it without pain.

Some days when the weather changes it becomes harder to bend. It's gets stiff and hurts; it's a fresh reminder of the day I hurt it. But most days I live with it just as it is; it is now a part of me. I remember how painful it was; I remember the scab. But now, I see the scar, and sometimes it even makes me smile.

David, I know you are in a beautiful place with many that have gone before and after you. I see you helping others, laughing, loving, and saving a place for us. I am thankful for your life and the many blessings you still give us. I am thankful to God that you are no longer suffering and in pain, and most days, I feel joy in my heart because I know that you are happy! Your father and I love you now and forever!

*Jill Eagleston,*

*TCF Southlake, TX*

*In Memory of our son, David Eagleston*

## Permission To Grieve

Give yourself permission to hurt and ask others to understand. It will be much better for all of you, if you keep from being too brave, too polite. That makes others feel more helpless, more

distant from you, perhaps even a bit rejected.

If you can, talk very briefly to your immediate family, especially to your partner, and ask for patience, promising yours in return. Because we all react differently to great emotional strain, this can be a time of temporary estrangements in your family – this is also the time to remember all the reasons why you loved each other in the first place. Don't worry about feeling 'nothing': your mind has been dealt a terrible blow, and your old feelings will need time to return. Do let others give you evidence of their devotion, concern, warmth, attention, empathy – after all, these are the finest gifts we can give to each other. And believe me: honesty in sharing your feelings is a gift from you to them, showing your friends and your helpers that you trust them, that they are important and that they are appreciated.

*Alexandra Sascha Wagner*

....this is what it is like.....

This is what it feels like to live without your child: "I am a mother. I am a bereaved mother. My child died, and this is my reluctant path.

It is not a path of my choice, but it is a path I must walk mindfully and with intention. It is a journey through the darkest night of my soul and it will take time to wind through the places that scare me.

Every cell in my body aches and longs to be with my beloved child. On days when grief is loud, I may be impatient, distracted, frustrated, and unfocused. I may get angry more easily and I may seem hopeless. I will shed many, many, many tears. I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing.

But please, just sit beside me.

Say nothing.

Do not offer a cure.

Or a pill, or a word, or a potion.

Witness my suffering and don't turn away from me. Please be gentle with me.

And I will try to be gentle with me too.

I will not ever "get over" my child's death so please don't urge me down that path.

Even on days when grief is quiescent, when it isn't standing loudly in the foreground, even on days when I am even able to smile again, the pain is just beneath the surface.

There are days when I still feel paralyzed. My chest feels the sinking weight of my child's absence and, sometimes, I feel as if I will explode from the grief.

Losing my child affects me in so many ways: as a woman, a mother, a human being. It affects every aspect of me: spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. There are days when I barely recognize myself in the mirror anymore. Grief is as personal to me as my fingerprint. Don't tell me how I should or shouldn't be grieving or that I should or shouldn't "feel better by now." Don't tell me what's right or wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time. If I am to survive this, I must do what is best for me.

My understanding of life will change and a different meaning of life will slowly evolve. What I knew to be true or absolute or real or fair about the world has been challenged so I'm finding my way, moment-to-moment in this new place. Things that once seemed important to me are barely thoughts any longer. I notice life's suffering more— hungry children, the homeless and the destitute, a mother's harsh voice toward her young child- or an elderly person struggling with the door, abused animals crying out in pain.

There are so many things about the world which I now struggle to understand: Why do children die? There are some questions, I've learned, which are simply unanswerable.

So please don't tell me that "God has a plan" for me. This, my friend, is between me and my God. Those platitudes slip far too easily from the mouths of those who tuck their own

child into a safe, warm bed at night: Can you begin to imagine your own child, flesh of your flesh, lying lifeless in a casket, when “goodbye” means you’ll never see them on this Earth again? Grieving mothers— and fathers— and grandparents— and siblings and partners won’t wake up one day with everything ‘okay’ and life back to normal. I have a new normal now.

As time passes, I may discover gifts, and treasures, and insights but anything gained was too high a cost when compared to what was lost.

Perhaps, one day, when I am very, very old, I will say that time has truly helped to heal my broken heart. But always remember that not a second of any minute of any hour of any day passes when I am not aware of the presence of my child’s absence, no matter how many years lurk over my shoulder.

So don’t forget that I have a child whose absence, like the sky, is spread over everything as C.S. Lewis said. Don’t forget to say, “How are you really feeling...?” Don’t forget that even if I do have living children, my heart still aches for the one who is not here— for I am never quite complete without my child.

My child may have died but my love — and my motherhood— never will.”  
*Dr. Joanne Cacciatore*

## The Group

I tell myself I no longer need the group and yet I still remain.

I tell myself I’m over the grief, and yet I still feel the pain.

I tell myself no one can possibly know how I feel.

And then that caring voice from across the circle says, “We’ll give you time to heal.” \_

I tell myself I can’t possibly contribute anything worthwhile by coming to this place.

And then I see the pain and suffering on each new member’s face.

I tell myself if something that you say in group tonight, helps even one person in any way,  
then your coming here is not a loss, but a tremendous gain indeed.  
I tell myself that’s what the group is all about, helping those in need.  
I tell myself stop listening to the voice inside who doubts.  
I tell myself it’s the other voice who knows what the group is all about.  
I tell myself I still need the group.  
I can’t deny it’s true.  
I tell myself that’s quite all right because the group still needs me too  
*Allison Nevarez, TCF Orange County*



## A Time to Grieve...A Time to Heal

Have you ever noticed the many mixed-up emotions involved in grieving?

On the one hand, you feel restless.

On the other hand, you feel like you don’t want to move at all.

You feel desperately alone, and yet you don’t want anyone around.

You feel scatter-brained, forgetful, and yet frantically meticulous.

You feel like crying at nothing, and yet sometimes laughing at anything.

(or do I have that backwards?)

Being in a crowd of people is fine as long as they don’t talk to you.

And yet, if they don’t talk to you, you feel as if nobody cares.

You want so desperately for someone to mention your child, to remember the life that once was.

And yet it can make you furious if ALL they want to talk about is the dead one, and never even mention the living ones.

Grief settles over you like a hot blanket, you’re as cold as winter snow.

Grief presses on you like a steam roller, you’re floating in a bubble above yourself.

Grief boxes you in on four sides, and introduces you to a pain no one should have to know.

But then, once again, you begin to feel compassion.

You relate to other parents who have had an experience similar to your own.

And eventually, with a light as sharp as a sunburst,

you hear yourself saying your child’s name with an unfamiliar smile on your face.

You remember some of the funny times, and feel laughter building in your throat.

One morning you notice that the sun is shining,

the flowers are bursting with the colors of Spring.

The seasons have passed unnoticed – and somehow, you are still here.

Even though your child is still THERE.

You feel your heart swell with a love you never even knew could exist.

And you find a place in your life for something called (dare I say) Peace...?

And then, ever so gently, the memories enfold you in a warmth as soothing as a cool shower

on a hot summer day.

So you find you want to remember

and tender memories of LOVE lift you to unreachable heights.

To the brightest of stars,

to the loveliest touch of YOUR CHILD.

*Dana Gensler,*

*TCF South Central KY*

# SIBS

## Ringin' in the New Year

This coming New Years Eve will be our 22nd without my dear brother Russell, who died in July 2002. It's a bittersweet holiday because it is also his birthday.

The holiday season can be a stressful time for everyone, but it can be especially hard for families whose lives have been shattered by loss. Celebrating the holidays suddenly felt like an empty ritual or a thing of the past. It was hard to embrace new traditions in order to find hope and joy again. It took time to give myself permission to do it the way that I do it.

I remember how hard the first few years were, how alone I felt in the world. I didn't know how to do the holidays without my brother. All I

could do was go through the motions. Spending time with family was often when I felt the most alone. It was hard to see the rest of the family intact, acting as if everything was ok, and no one talked about Russell but me.

New Years Eve was especially tough, as there seemed no where to go and nothing to do where Russell wasn't there. His absence was ever present for me. My grief followed me to every party, a cloud hung over me at every celebratory event. Alone in my thoughts, surrounded by strangers who didn't know or care what I was going through.

The repetition helped. My process of grief has been Trial and Error – MOSTLY Error! As hard as these events that come up every year can be, they are also opportunities to try

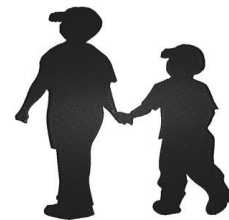
something new. Every year I get to find ways for the holiday season to suck less.

Every year I get a little bit better at navigating the hard days. I have made it my job to bring up Russell at family events. It was a little awkward and weird those first few years; it was clear that it made some people in my family uncomfortable because it forced them to confront his death, but I am always going to make sure I remind everyone of his LIFE. It's up to me to keep talking about Russell, to remind people that he lived, to normalize the fact that we're going to continue talking about him as a family. It's comforting to me to know that I get to keep working at it until I find what feels good.

About 5 years after Russell's death, my parents and I started hosting a party on New Years Eve that we always describe as a hybrid NYE/Russell's birthday party. It's a mixture of my friends, my parents' friends, and always a nice showing from our TCF family. Everyone there knows the deal, and I'm allowed to be emotional if I want, or jubilant, or whatever I need to be and no one will judge.

It's also just the perfect low-key way to ring in the new year, similar to a party my parents threw years ago that Russell and I basically crashed (along with a half dozen friends). We always have a huge spread of food and desserts (SO many desserts – Russell was a pastry chef after all). At midnight we sing happy birthday to Russell, and then we do a balloon launch, giving everyone there a chance to write

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### Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings Telephone Friends

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:

- Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062
- Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938
- Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006
- Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919
- Bob Vitolins - A father's grief - (313) 882-8632
- Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

**Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.**

**TCF CHAT ROOM:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.

**National Mailing Address:** 48660 Pontiac Trail, #930808 Wixom, MI 48393

Phone: 877-969-0010; Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

#### OTHER TCF CHAPTERS IN OUR AREA:

**Ann Arbor:** Mike Fedel: [MikeFedela2@gmail.com](mailto:MikeFedela2@gmail.com); 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor

**St. Clair Shores:** 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, [kjmac21@aol.com](mailto:kjmac21@aol.com)

**Detroit:** Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church, 12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.

**Troy:** St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday 7-9; [Tina@586-634-0239](mailto:Tina@586-634-0239)

**South Rockwood TCF Chapter:** Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive, South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469



### PLEASE REMEMBER

Sibings are welcome to attend the Livonia Compassionate Friend meetings. We ask that you be at least 16 years old.

# Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, January 2nd. Newcomers table and topic tables. Topic: Have you thought of any New Year's Resoluiton that deal with your grief - either emotional or such things as make a quilt, a scrapbook or something else to commemorate your child.

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**A Love Gift** is a gift of money to Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died, but may also be from individuals who want to honor a relative or friend who has died, simply a gift from someone who wants to make a donation to help in the work of the Livonia Compassionate Friends. Love Gift form is on back page.

- ♥ Susan Steinberg in memory of: **Shannon**; "Happy Heavenly 56th Birthday my dear girl. We love you so much and miss you always. Love, Mom, Dad, Todd, Chris & Ajax"
  - ♥ Cindy & Matt Stevens in memory of: **Justin**; "Always thinking of and missing you Justin. It has been 12 long years without you. Forever in our hearts. Love, Mom & Matt"
  - ♥ Sharon Curson in memory of: David Jones II; "David, every day of the past 27 years you have been in our hearts. We all miss and love you so much! Mom & family"
- 

## Let Us Celebrate Their Births

messages to their lost loved ones and send them up. It's become a real source of healing and connection to be able to celebrate not just Russell, but all the people we still have in our lives. It truly feels like Russell is there with us every year. For many years, I was convinced that all my New Years would be ruined for the rest of my life, but the truth is, I would never be able to celebrate it with as many people as I do were his birthday any other day of the year.

One year when Russell was very young, he was awakened by the fire-works at midnight, only to run out into the living room asking, "is it time for more presents?!"

I have tried to think of NYE the same way that Russell did – that the whole world was celebrating his birthday whether they knew it or not, and I allow myself to celebrate him every year, along with the rest of the world

*Jordan Ferber*



## Candle Lighting 2024



TCF Livonia Chapter  
Brenda Brummel  
10531 Calumet Trail  
Gaylord, MI 49735

## January 2025

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,  
*please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel*

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### LOVE GIFTS

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Love Gift Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

Direct my gift to: \_\_\_\_\_ Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web  
\_\_\_\_\_ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127

### Books to Help

Winter in the northland seems to be an especially good time to “curl up with a book.” Here are a few suggested books that deal with grief.

- **The Bereaved Parent**  
by Harriet Sarnoff
- **First You Die**  
by Marie Levine
- **Talking to Heaven**  
by James Van Praagh
- **Beyond Tears**  
by nine mothers
- **Love Never Dies**  
by Sandy Goodman

For an extensive list of books, go to the national website:

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/books/>

Another source of books is the Centering Corporation:

[to www.centeringcorp.org](http://www.centeringcorp.org)